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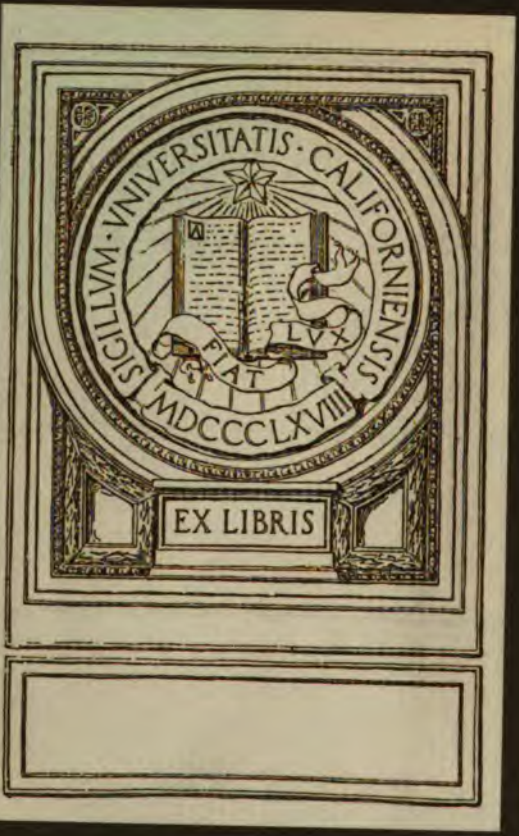
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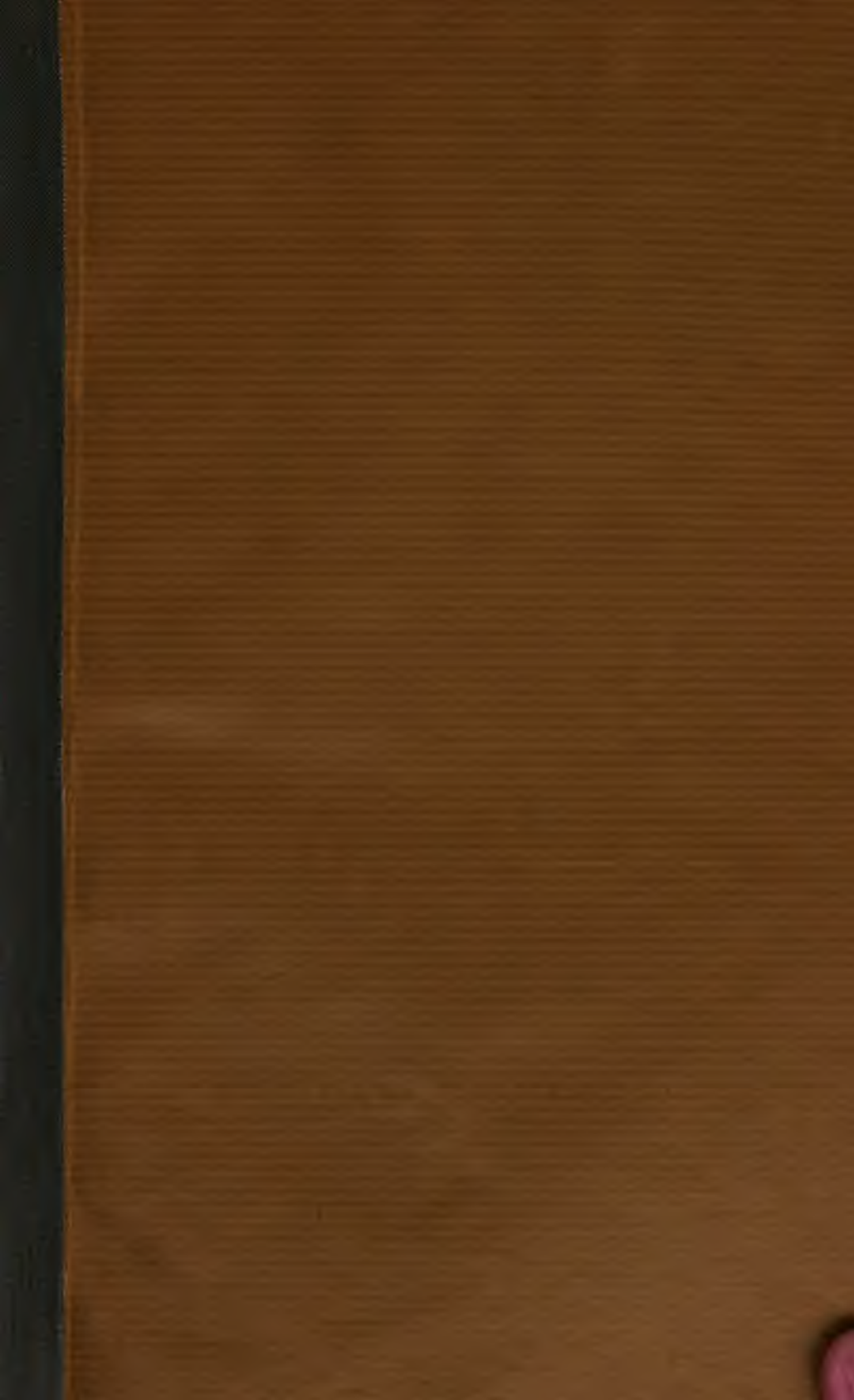
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# A LETTER

RESPECTFULLY ADDRESSED TO

UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA

THE REV. J. H. NEWMAN,

UPON SOME PASSAGES IN HIS

LETTER TO THE REV. DR. JELF.

BY N. WISEMAN, D. D.

*Bishop of Melipotamus.*

**Third Edition.**

LONDON:

CHARLES DOLMAN, NEW BOND STREET.

MDCCCLXI.

TO THE  
ASSOCIATION

EX 1780  
W 5

BIRMINGHAM :  
PRINTED BY WILLIAM STONE.

ad. 15

# A LETTER,

&c.

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*St. Mary's College, Oscott,  
March 27, [1841]*

REV. SIR,

THE second edition of your Letter to Dr. JELF has just reached me; I had not been able to see it sooner. In addressing directly to yourself some observations upon it, I hope you will not consider me as presuming upon the passing acquaintance I made with you some years ago in Rome, however pleasant to me the recollection of it may be, but as moved by considerations of a higher character. I have sufficient confidence in your candour and in your powers, to believe that, if I shall be so happy as to convince you of the inaccuracy of any of your views and statements, you will be the first to correct them, and will be able to remove the impressions you have produced, far better than I could ever hope to do. On the other hand, did I address the public only, as though entering into controversy against you, and not into discussion with you, I might appear to exclude from my earnest anxiety to convince, the very person in whom the character of the present theological enquiry naturally prompts me to feel most interested. I will, therefore, temperately but frankly, proceed to offer you my observations upon such parts of your Letter, as must be distressing to every well-instructed Catholic.

The purport of your Letter to Dr. Jelf is to vindicate yourself against the sentence of four tutors of

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Colleges, who have represented the Tract No. 90, of which you are the author, as asserting that the Thirty-nine Articles do not condemn "Purgatory, Pardons, Worshipping and adoration of Images and Relics, the Invocation of Saints, and the Mass, as they are *taught authoritatively* by the Church of Rome."

Your reply to this is, that you "consider that they *do* contain a condemnation of the 'authoritative teaching' of the Church of Rome, on these points:" that you "only say that, whereas they were written before the decrees of Trent, they were not directed against those decrees." P. 4. Your next paragraph—painful though it be to my feelings—I must give in your own words.

"As to the present authoritative teaching of the Church of Rome, to judge by what we see of it in public, I think it goes very far indeed to substitute another Gospel for the true one. Instead of setting before the soul the Holy Trinity, and Heaven, and Hell, it does seem to me, as a popular system, to preach the Blessed Virgin, and the Saints, and Purgatory. If there ever was a system which required reformation, it is that of Rome at this day, or in other words, (as I should call it) Romanism or Popery." P. 5.

In further explanation of your meaning, you quote a passage from another of your writings, from which I think it sufficient, at present, to extract the following sentence. "In the Roman Schools we find St. Mary and the Saints the prominent objects of regard and dispensers of mercy, Purgatory or Indulgences the means of obtaining it, the Pope the ruler and teacher of the Church, and miracles the warrant of doctrines." Ibid.

Your intention seems to be, as far as I can gather it

from these and other passages in the Letter, to establish a distinction between the doctrines defined or decreed in the General Council of Trent, and the *authoritative teaching* of the Roman Church, that is, I suppose, of the Catholic Church in communion with Rome. It is not your intention, I presume, to designate by the term "authoritative teaching" local abuses, or the extravagances of individual writers, but the teaching by authority, which that Church, as a Church, sanctions and pursues.

The existence of any such *authoritative teaching* at variance with the doctrines of the Tridentine Synod is, to me, a novel idea; and I think will prove so to all Catholics. It is chiefly with respect to its existence and its supposed objects and systems, as described by you, that I take the liberty of respectfully addressing you.

Suppose I were to assert, that in the Church of England, there is an "authoritative teaching," at variance with the Articles, as interpreted by you in the Tract. You believe your interpretation of the Articles to be the only one reconcilable with catholic truth, or that can bring your Church into harmony with the Catholic Church.\* Suppose then further that I reasoned, that your Church was not to be judged by the Articles, but by such authoritative teaching, and that therefore its doctrines, and consequently itself, are not catholic. How

\* "But these remarks are beyond our present scope, which is merely to shew that while our Prayer book is acknowledged on all hands to be of Catholic origin, our Articles also, the offspring of an uncatholic age, are through God's good providence, to say the least, *not uncatholic*, and may be subscribed to by those who aim at being catholic in heart and doctrine." Tract p. 4.

would you reply? I think you would justly ask, *where* does that authoritative teaching reside? Who has power to make it, so as to limit the interpretation of the Articles? You would not be satisfied with extracts against Transubstantiation, the Mass, a middle State of souls, and honouring of Saints, from *hundreds* of writers and divines in communion with your Church, who have proclaimed that these things are, completely and without reserve, condemned in and by your Church. You would not be content with the joint opinion of College Tutors, or of the hebdomadal board, or, I believe, of individual bishops, whose sentiments are in part recorded on your views. None of these, individually or collectively, would you allow, I think, to have the character of an authoritative teaching; certainly not to the extent of justifying an opponent, in fastening upon your Church their sentiments, *instead* of the Articles.

Let us apply this case to ours. It is a serious thing to charge us with setting up the Blessed Virgin in place of the Holy Trinity, and Purgatory instead of Heaven and Hell. We naturally ask, what shall be considered sufficient evidence of there being an *authoritative teaching*, that supersedes the solemn and synodal decrees of our Church, and makes us responsible *in solidum* for its lessons? This I have endeavoured to discover in your Letter; and yet I own, I have been foiled, even as to any plausible conjecture concerning what you yourself had in mind, when you adopted the term. You seem to have rested content with certain

vague generalities, not easily reduced to tangible forms. I will try to enumerate some of your various evidences of this "*authoritative teaching*."

- 1°. "What we see of it" (I suppose of our teaching) "in public." p. 6.
- 2°. The doctrine of "the Roman schools." Ibid. and p. 8.
- 3°. The teaching of the Catechism of the Council of Trent. p. 5.
- 4°. "Popular notions" of Catholics, *as attested by the Homilies and Jeremy Taylor*. Ibid.
- 5°. The abuses which *Luther* assailed *before* the Council of Trent. Ibid.
- 6°. Popular worship and practice of Catholics in general. p. 7, par. 1.
- 7°. The honours paid to saints in catholic countries. Ibid. par. 2.
- 8°. The sentiments of "all the best writers" upon such subjects. p. 10.

I could add some other heads I think ; but these will suffice. I put it, Rev. Sir, to your candour and good sense, whether you would admit such evidences as these, of a teaching in your church, sufficiently authoritative, to be considered as taking place in it of the Articles you have subscribed. To "the teaching of the Roman schools, the Catechism of the Council of Trent, and the sentiments of the best writers," I have no objections to make. But that you should give as evidences of authoritative teaching "popular notions" and practices, &c. is certainly surprising. Popular notions concerning the

Bible and Rule of Faith, you surely would not admit as evidence of the teaching of your Church: popular practice as to fasting, the Eucharist, and prayer, you would not allow to define your doctrines on those subjects.

But you must bear with me if I go into details, both as regards the evidences which you refer to, and the doctrines you suppose them to teach.

1<sup>o</sup>. The *Roman Schools*. I have given one extract where you appeal to these, in support of your views. In the Tract p. 24, you express a similar sentiment, and you have copied it into your Letter. "What is opposed" (by Art. xxii) "is the *received doctrine of the day*, and *unhappily of this day too*, or the *doctrines of the Roman Schools*." After the extract, you thus proceed. "This doctrine of the Schools is at present, on the whole, the established creed \* of the Roman Church, and this I call Romanism or Popery." P. 8.

What, I beg leave to ask, *are* these "Roman Schools?" What does the term signify? Where is the teaching of these Schools authentically recorded?

Bear with me, if I speak too prominently in my own name, because I have some right to come forward as evidence in this matter. I have resided for two and twenty years in Rome, intimately connected with its theological education. For five years I attended "the Roman Schools" in the Roman College, where all the clergy of the City were obliged to be educated. I went through

\* Here we have an instance again of vagueness of language, on matters which require strict accuracy. What constitutes "*the established Creed of a Church?*" Is it not the doctrine of its *formularies*, as solemnly recognized by its authorities? How then is the term here applied?

the entire theological course, and publicly maintained it in a thesis. Since then I have been always engaged in teaching theology in our national College ; and for some years have held the office of a professor in the Roman University. I ought therefore to be tolerably acquainted with the doctrines of the Roman Schools.

Now I solemnly assure you that, throughout the entire course of studies, I never heard a word that could lead me to suppose, that our Blessed Lady and the Saints are, or ought to be, the "prominent objects of regard," or *could* be "dispensers of mercy:" or that "Purgatory or Indulgences are the means of obtaining it, &c."\*

Moreover I declare, with all sincerity and earnestness, that I have always there heard and taught, exactly the contrary to what you represent as the doctrine of the *Roman Schools*. Surely if there be any place, institution, system, or code, on earth, which has a right to this name, it must be that of the very schools to which I refer.

But perhaps you will say, that it is not the formal teaching which you mean, but the spirit infused into the whole system of the Roman schools ; as if one should say of the Oxford *school*, (not *schools*) that it taught certain doctrines, he would not signify that such doctrines are delivered *ex cathedra*, but that they are instilled throughout the course, and form its soul or spirit. But to produce this effect, *some* means at least are necessary. The doctrines, which it is wished to

\* The very idea sounds new, that Purgatory is ever considered a *means* of obtaining mercy, at least to the living who are ever exhorted to escape it ; a *place* of mercy we certainly consider it, I never remember hearing or seeing it enumerated among the *media* or *means* of mercy.

bring prominently forward, will be repeatedly inculcated and insinuated, and their importance dilated on. Yet here again, I cannot recall to my mind any circumstance, which, upon reconsideration, appears to me like any such attempt, or such a system.

The distribution of the theological course was at that time as follows. One professor occupied four years (an hour's lecture a day) upon the Sacraments, the "instruments of grace and pardon," as you rightly tell us, in the ancient Church. Another professor distributed his course, as follows : first year, *De Locis Theologicis*, and chiefly *De Ecclesia* ; second, *De Deo Uno et Trino* ; third, *De Incarnatione* ; fourth, *De Gratia*. A third professor was engaged two years on Scripture ; and a fourth, the same time, on Moral Theology. These were the obligatory courses, without having attended which, no one could receive Orders. Now, I ask you, are the *Anglican* "schools" so arranged as to "set before the soul, the Holy Trinity," or to make "Christ the Son of God, his grace, his Sacraments and his Church, the main aspect in the economy of Redemption," more decidedly, more clearly, or more essentially, than does this theological system of the *Roman* schools ? You are, I dare say, conversant with the order and matter of the theological treatises I have enumerated : but I am sure many others of my readers will hardly know, where those matters which you consider the prominent ones in the *Roman* schools, are introduced in them. For their sakes I will state it. All that is taught about "St. Mary

and the saints," their relics and images, is introduced into a short treatise at the end of *De Incarnatione*.\* Indulgences are spoken of in a supplementary treatise, or appendix, to Penance, among the Sacraments.† And as to Purgatory, which your readers will naturally suppose has quite superseded in our minds heaven and hell, it comes in between the two, occupying far smaller space in our theological works than either of them,‡ in a tract appended to that *De Deo Creatore*, which is often distinct from the one on the Trinity.

This forms the doctrinal teaching of the "Roman schools;" and if it be such as I have described it in their very centre, I suppose no one will doubt that the authoritative teaching of other Catholic places will not go beyond Rome itself, in what you consider Roman doctrines.

But perhaps I have not as yet caught your meaning: your expression may be intended to apply to the ascetic, rather than to the dogmatical, teaching of Rome. Let us then examine this. In the first place, I may observe that in speaking of authoritative teaching in a church, and appealing for its existence to its *schools*, one naturally understands the dogmatical schools, as indexes of dogmatical teaching. But secondly, there is, properly speaking, no other *school*. We must examine the ascetic teaching chiefly in authorised and sanctioned practices.

\* In the theological course now pursued at the Roman College, that of Father Perrone, the treatise *De Incarnatione* occupies upwards of 360 pages: that on the Saints, their Images, Relics, &c. under one hundred. Vol. iv. Rom. 1836

† In Perrone's work it occupies less than 50 pages. Matrimony occupies upwards of 200. Vol. vii.

‡ Ibid. Vol. iii. Heaven occupies about 45 pages, Hell 53, Purgatory 23.



Do these, then, countenance your assertion, of an authoritative teaching which has usurped the place and authority of the Tridentine Canons, and has made those blasphemous and idolatrous substitutions, which it is painful to me to repeat?

Every year, the pulpit of almost every great church in large cities, and of every metropolitan and parochial church in other places, gives a regular course of Lenten sermons, often filled with warm and feeling eloquence. The general practice is to devote one sermon, (on the third Sunday) to Purgatory. Indulgences I have never heard introduced into the series: the B. Virgin seldom more than once, on the commemoration of her Dolours. But death, heaven, hell, judgment, form the theme of many discourses. A fortnight towards the end of Lent is always set aside (in addition to the course in the morning) for daily instructions to crowded churches, on what? on purgatory or indulgences, as the means of obtaining mercy? No: but on the paschal duty of a sincere repentance and confession, and of a worthy participation of the B. Eucharist. I doubt if *those* two topics are even alluded to.

The spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius, or a spiritual retreat, are considered the most efficacious means of bringing men to a sense of duty, and a life of virtue. And I will say, from tolerable experience, that their efficacy is little short of miraculous. They consist in a series of meditations (based upon the consideration of Man's end) much in the following order: on sin, on

hell, on death and judgment—several on each—not one on purgatory; then, on the incarnation and birth of our Saviour, on the mysteries of His infancy, on His life, then on His sufferings and death; afterwards on His resurrection, on heaven, the Blessed Eucharist, and the love of God! Not one on the Blessed Virgin! The pulpit and the spiritual retreat are the two principal means of individual sanctification, in the *outward* economy of the Church.

Take the Italian, or French, or Spanish catechism; and candidly examine, whether in any of them, the Trinity and Incarnation, and the entire Creed be not the primary and principal subjects of instruction:—whether any thing is taught the children who learn their faith in it, that can lead them to suppose that the Blessed Virgin, purgatory, images, and indulgences, are the main subjects to be attended to.

I really do not know where to look for an “authoritative teaching” as carried on in the “Roman schools,” beyond the places and objects which I have enumerated, and I cannot find in any of these the smallest proposition, or intimation, at variance with the Decrees of the holy Tridentine Synod. But before quitting this subject of the Roman schools, permit me to draw your attention to one of the specific doctrines which you seem to attribute to them. You will bear in mind that you identify what *was* the received doctrine of the Roman schools when the Articles were drawn up, with what it now is. (Tract p. 24. Letter p. 8.) The passage, then, to which I allude is the following startling one. “For instance as to Purgatory,

I consider (with the Homily) that the Article opposes the main idea *really encouraged by Rome*, that *temporal punishment is a substitute for hell in the case of the unholy*, and all the superstitions consequent thereon. (Letter, p. 24.)

You are aware, Rev. Sir, that your assertion weighs much with many: that you are believed to have made no common study of catholic works of theology and piety, and to have endeavoured to gain acquaintance, to a greater extent and in a kinder spirit than most others, with the true doctrines of our Church. A doctrine like the one which you state, is wicked and fiendish, driving men headlong, because cruelly hoodwinked, to perdition. Can you prove that Rome has "really " ever "encouraged," or does now "encourage" such an idea? In what formulary? in what decree or declaration? by what practice? by what connivance? I cannot remember anything, published or done, that can possibly be construed into any such encouragement. If you have proofs of this terrible assertion, I earnestly call upon you to produce them; if you have not, I entreat you in charity to recall it.

2. Another evidence of an authoritative teaching in the Catholic Church, which goes beyond, or supersedes, the Tridentine decrees, you draw from the Catechism of that Council. This looks the most plausible of all your corroborations of your theory; but I think upon consideration you will see that it has been unfairly used.

*First*, to put the Catechism at variance with the Council, which ordered it to be drawn up and published,

strikes one, at once, as unnatural, and as a fallacy. Those who compiled it and revised it were among the most learned and zealous assistants at the Council; they undertook to embody in a catechetical form, its doctrines. We must suppose these men, (and mind they were St. Charles Borromeo, Sirletus, Seripandus, Foreiro, Medina, and others of equal character) deliberately contradicting their own acts, or else not knowing what they had previously decreed. Such hypotheses cannot be reasonably sustained.

*Secondly.* The fact, in truth, is, that the Catechism is a popular exposition, and therefore admits greater latitude of expression; it even states matters not of faith. Thus you will find the doctrine of Angels-guardian taught and expounded in it, though only a pious belief, not an article of faith: we are also told there that the Apostles drew up the Creed, though this has not been defined by the Church. It employs, therefore, the usual language in which a doctrine is spoken of in the Church. From the time of St Augustine it has been usual to call purgatory, whatever its purgation may consist of, a fire, a cleansing fire, &c. But to say, that the incidental use of such a term constitutes an authoritative teaching, more binding and decisive than the cautious phraseology of a dogmatical definition, is clearly a straining of facts for the sake of an argument.\*

\* To show how far catholic divines are from imagining that this expression of the Catechism interferes with the liberty allowed by the decree, I will quote the words of Perrone; which are, in fact, the language of every catholic theologian. "Omnia igitur quae spectant ad locum, durationem,

*Thirdly.* Your theory is, that the authoritative teaching, which has replaced the Tridentine doctrines, has made Purgatory or Indulgences usurp the place of the sacraments as "means of obtaining mercy," And you quote the Catechism as evidence of this teaching. Will your readers, think you, imagine, that in that voluminous compilation, the subject of Purgatory occupies just two sentences? that in treating of Penance, Indulgences are not even mentioned?

*Fourthly.* If the Catechism is better evidence of what we authoritatively teach, than even the decrees of the Synod, why not let us have the entire benefit of such evidence? For instance, let us be tried by the very test you have proposed for Purgatory, on the subject of Images. After explaining their lawfulness and use, the Catechism thus proceeds. "But as the enemy of mankind, by his wiles and deceits, seeks to pervert every the most holy institution, should the faithful happen at all to offend in this particular, the pastor, in accordance with the decree of the Council of Trent, will use every exertion in his power to correct such an abuse, and when occasion offers, *will explain the decree itself to*

poenarum qualitatem, ad catholicam fidem minime spectant, seu definita ab ecclesia non sunt. Num scilicet....ignis purgatorii sit materialis an metaphoricus; utrum scilicet consistat in quadam animi tristitia exorta ex antea vitae consideratione, foeditate peccati, &c....diversae olim de iis extiterunt inter veteres Ecclesiae Patres, et inter scholasticos etiam recentiores adhuc vigent discrepantes sententiae." Vol. iii. p. 321. Surely this will satisfy any reasonable mind, that we are as free to speculate on the nature of purgatory since the Catechism called it a fire, as we were for the two years between the ratification of the Council (1564) and the publication of the Catechism, (1566.

*the people," &c.\** Is this an "authoritative teaching" which supersedes the decree of Trent, or a sanctioning, on the subject of images, of more than it warrants? I beg in like manner to refer you to the instructions of the Catechism regarding the worship of Saints.† And again I ask, if its doctrine have to prove so much for you on purgatory, because fire is merely mentioned, ought you not to have given us the benefit of what it proves on *all* the other subjects, included by you under the title of Roman doctrines?

3°. "I conceive that what 'all the best writers' say is authoritative teaching, and a sufficient object for the censures conveyed in the Articles, though the decrees of Trent, taken by themselves, remain untouched." p. 10. I am willing to admit the test; and therefore shall be satisfied that you are right, if you will give the testimony of all, or any, of our best writers in favour of what you call "Romanism or Popery," that is, "preaching the Blessed Virgin, the Saints and Purgatory," instead of "the Holy Trinity, Heaven and Hell," &c. I might, indeed, justly protest against having the authoritative teaching of the Catholic Church decided by the opinions of one individual, or of any number of individuals, however respectable, if such teaching be contrary to, or beyond, that of our last General Council; as much as you would against the doctrines of your church being determined by the opinion of Bishop Hoadley, or its principles by those of Bishop Newton, rather than by the Articles. But I have no

\* Catechism. Rom. Part. iii. Vol. . p. 441, Ed. Rome, 1839. Latin and English.

† Ibid. p. 27.

objection to waive that plea, and accept you own terms. Our best writers are well known to you better than to most: show in them such a system as you have described, and you will have done something towards carrying out your views. But Dr. Lloyd's bare assertion, which is all you now have, will not suffice.

However, after all, allow me to put it to yourself, whether you have not inadvertently, fallen into a mistake, in applying his words? They are as follows:—

"That latria is due only to the Trinity is continually asserted in the *Councils*; but the terms of dulia, and hyperdulia have not been adopted or acknowledged by them in their public documents; they are however employed unanimously by all the best writers of the Romish Church." On these words, you make the comment with which I began this paragraph. Your object is to confirm, by the words of Dr. Lloyd, a discrepancy between the *Council of Trent* and catholic writers of celebrity. Dr. Lloyd, however, speaks of *Councils* in the plural. And in fact, I think you will not find the word *latria* any more than *dulia* in the decrees of the Council of Trent. Therefore, no proof of discrepancy between it and writers, can be drawn from this statement of Dr. Lloyd's. Moreover, I will observe, that the use of terms by certain writers, will not put them in contradiction to the Council, simply because it happened not to employ them: the doctrine of both is one.

4<sup>o</sup>. These seem to be the only sources which could have a right, with any plausibility, to be alleged as evidence of an authoritative teaching in our Church,

distinct from its formularies. They all give the same results as these. I will now glance at your remaining heads of evidence.

I think you yourself, when you endeavour to analyze the conviction in your mind of the existence of your "authoritative teaching" in the Catholic Church, will find that it is not based upon the use of the word "fire" in the Catechism, nor on any teaching of any Roman Schools, nor upon the works of "all our best writers;" but rather upon what you call the "popular worship" (which you identify with our "existing creed") p. 7. upon "popular notions of catholics" on "what is seen in public" and on such like *very popular* and generally admitted themes of anticatholic declamation. I do not think you would deliberately allow yourself to be led away by these. I do not think you would reflectingly take, for a guide of your sentiments, the prejudiced statements of travellers, or the assertions, however unanimous, of the great body of writers against us. But it is exceedingly difficult to think, differently from what every body about us has always been thinking and saying. It is almost impossible to stay the mind, when hurried on by the press of those behind, and on either side of us. And so I fancy that you, like many other candid men, (and I am sorry to add, occasionally some catholics) having heard every protestant traveller, and every protestant writer, and in fact almost every protestant man and woman, describe or take for granted, the superstitions of the Italians, or of Spaniards, and their enthusiastic devotion to the Mother of God, or their confidence in Indulgences, &c. have too



implicitly assumed all this ; and so have come to construct your theory, that this "popular religion" is the fruit of a certain authoritative teaching, although this does not exist in any tangible or visible form. Perhaps, indeed, you would consider a *tacit sanction* of such practices and doctrines as you describe, equivalent to an *authoritative teaching* of them. If so, the expression is likely to mislead ; but my task remains the same.

*First*, then, I would most respectfully ask, are you prepared to say, that any extent of corruption, or sanction of error by the members of a church, if at variance with its acknowledged formularies, deprives the Church of the benefit of these, and warrants its being treated as having admitted a new faith ? If you are then, I answer, that you and your friends, from the early Tracts down to Mr. Bowden,\* have been grievously in error, when you have maintained that the supposed corruptions in the Catholic Church, *before* the Council of Trent, did not invalidate its title to be the true Church, *because* such errors were not embodied in formularies of faith. For, if practical corruptions are to be taken as stronger declarations of the Church's belief than the formularies themselves, then had the Church forfeited all claims, and sanctioned error, as much before, as after, the Synod. Now your argument does assume, that certain supposed practical corruptions amongst us have more right to indicate our "existing creed," than the very decrees of a Council, to which we all are bound. Further, I ask you, whereas the Established Church, for a considerable period, (as during the last century,) had

\* Life of Gregory VII. vol. i. p. 7.

forgotten or rejected those views which you have revived, and authoritatively taught, as far as universal teaching public and private went, views of the Articles diametrically opposed to your present ones, do you consider this universal defection, as establishing the doctrines of your Church, in preference to the Articles?

I think, therefore, that it will not be easy to determine, that the decrees of Trent are to be put aside, by any amount of practical departure from them. A catholic can never be obliged, by any authority, to go beyond them: and therefore, if such universal defection exist amongst us as you imply, he may be like Lot in Sodom, standing alone in virtue; but his faith or creed will be that of the Council.

But, *secondly*, let us come to the question of fact, which is the more important. Is the popular belief and practice in catholic countries such as to warrant your theory? Allow me to ask you what means you have used to arrive at a knowledge of the "popular notions" of catholics on the points at issue? or of their belief? For by these must their practices be mainly judged.

What evidence have you, for instance, that they go beyond a sound faith respecting our Blessed Lady? Have you ever seen a popular work that told them or insinuated to them, that she could be the object of faith? that to her sacrifice could be offered? that she could forgive sins? or that any other prerogative of the Supreme Being belongs to her? Or have you yourself been able to converse with the people, and ascertain their ideas, upon these and similar topics?

or have you received information concerning them, from such as have had means or opportunity of ascertaining them? If not, allow me to assure you that you may have been easily led into error.

Perhaps you will tell me that such investigation is unnecessary (although I think christian charity will consider none too troublesome, before pronouncing a sentence of idolatry upon many millions,) because gross abuses meet the eye; because crowds are seen praying before images of the Blessed Virgin and the shrines of Saints; because Indulgences are proclaimed on all sides, and Purgatory is placed before the thoughts by frequent representations.

Now, to examine this view of the case, let us take as an instance, an Italian peasant. What are the religious exercises which are enjoined him, and which he regularly attends? *First*, the holy sacrifice of the Mass, every Sunday and holiday, and pretty generally every morning before going to work. He knows, as well as you or I, what the Mass is, and that it cannot be offered up to any, save to God. *2ndly*, the Holy Communion at least several times a year; often, much more frequently. *3rdly*, as a preparation for it, confession of his sins, made penitently and contritely. These two sacraments he well knows have nothing to do with the Blessed Mother of God; nor can Indulgences,\* still less Purgatory, be

\* When Mr. Newman tells us that Indulgences have usurped the place of the sacraments, he probably overlooked the fact that no plenary indulgence (save one or two) can be gained without confession and communion. Thus an Indulgence, instead of replacing the sacraments, ensures their reception. A condition always is, that the faithful be "*vere poenitentes confessi et sacra communione refecti.*" see Bouvier (Bp. of Mans.) *Traité des Indulgences.* p. 65, Tournay, 1837.

substituted for them. 4thly, the Benediction, or adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, generally in the evening of all festivals, and often on other days. To this we may add the forty hours' prayer, or exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for that space of time, watched by adorers day and night. Among the prayers most frequently inculcated, and publicly recited, are acts of faith, hope, charity, and contrition, which are always repeated by the children after catechism, and well known by the most illiterate. These leading exercises of worship and devotion all belong to God: the principal one that is referable to the Blessed Virgin is the Rosary. This generally forms a part of family evening devotions, and is moreover occasionally said in public. \* I would gladly enter, did my present object permit such details, into an explanation and analysis of this devotion, one of the most beautiful to my mind; at present I need only say, that every book of devotion will show you, what the Catechism in Italy, and I believe in Spain, fully explains, that the Mysteries of Our Saviour's Birth, Death, and Triumph, are the real objects of this form of prayer. However, take it as you please; consider it as a devotion principally addressed to the Blessed Virgin, and add to it any others usually said, as her Litany—and I ask you what do they amount to, compared with the exercises of piety which I have before enumerated, the most solemn by far, and the most indispensable? For every catholic, however ignorant, knows that he must every festival

\* The Rosary is likewise the prayer of those who cannot read, and who find their attention kept up best by some outward practice, such as the use of beads afforded.

assist at Mass, under pain of sin ; but none imagine that a similar penalty is attached to the neglect of any of their devotions to the Blessed Virgin. This surely forms a most important distinction between the two worships, that to God, and that to the greatest of the Saints.

But again, I shall be told, that the manner in which the poorer Catholics pray before her images and those of the Saints, betrays a greater fervour of devotion than they display at other times ; nay, that it even indicates a superstitious trust in those outward symbols themselves. This appearance may be partly true ; though I am ready most completely to deny, that half the ardour, enthusiasm, and devotion is ever exhibited before relics or images, which you may see any day before the Blessed Sacrament, when it is exposed to adoration. But at the same time, I will assert that the tenderer emotions are not the proper tests of higher feelings, such as confidence, veneration, and homage. A child may be more fondling and affectionate with his mother, while he will more reverence, more obey, more believe, and more confide in his father. And so I conceive, that the more sensible part of devotion, that which works upon natural feelings, may be more apparently excited by the joys, the sufferings, the glories and the virtues of beings more akin to our nature, than by contemplation of those, however much more perfect, of a Being infinitely removed from our sphere. What thought so powerful as to be able to measure the abyss of suffering, which overwhelms the heart of Jesus, expiring on the cross ? But what mind so dull, or what heart so callous, as not to be able to apprehend the

maternal feelings of her, who stands bereaved, at its foot ? Does not *her* grief, in fact, present us the truest and clearest mirror of *His* sufferings ? Does not the *Stabat Mater*, on that very account, excite the purest sentiments of love and sorrow for the Son, because His griefs are viewed through the sympathies of the Mother ? But, does it follow, that because the illiterate give way to such feelings as these, more strongly than others, and exhibit them more openly, we are to judge their hearts, and pronounce, without question or enquiry, that they have renounced their faith, and abjured their God ? Is not this the sin of Heli, who, witnessing the deep feeling of Anna's prayer, pronounced her drunk ?\* And has not many a poor Italian been equally unjustly judged, when upon similar evidence, he has been pronounced an idolater ?

There is, I am sure, much serious misapprehension in this country, regarding the religious instruction of poor catholics abroad, and their knowledge of their respective duties towards God and other beings. Their devotional feelings are taken as tests of their convictions and faith ; and men who never perhaps feel sensible emotions in prayer to *God*, measuring the enthusiastic feelings of foreign hearts towards inferior beings, by their *own* towards the superior, judge them not merely extravagant, but derogatory to higher worship. But interrogate those who have manifested those powerful feelings, about their faith, and you will soon find that it is *Tridentine* and sound.

Allow me, by way of illustration, to relate an anecdote

\* 1 Sam. i. 13.

communicated to me by a learned and pious friend. He was on an excursion to Pæstum with a protestant companion, who often descanted on the superstition and ignorance of the Italians; and certainly no spot could appear more likely to justify his ideas, than the immense unwholesome plain over which they were journeying; the inhabitants of which, one would naturally suppose, must be debarred from all chance of religious instruction. A little boy mounted behind the carriage, and offered to be their *Cicerone* to the ruins,—his dress and appearance sufficiently bespoke his poverty. To him it was determined to refer the subject of discussion. “Do you love the Madonna?” was the first question asked. The little fellow’s eyes sparkled with affection and delight, as he answered in the affirmative. “Who redeemed the Madonna?” he was then asked. “Her own Son,” was his reply. “Could she have redeemed you?” “Not unless her Son commanded her.” The protestant gentleman, (who has often since spoken of his “little Pæstum theologian” as he calls him,) owned himself surprised and corrected. Here in fact we have that separation accurately expressed, between the feelings and the belief. The love of that child for the Mother of God seemed unbounded; but he well knew her to be but a creature, dependant on her Son, and by Him redeemed. I doubt whether many boys at a grammar school could have given such answers.\*

\* By way of contrast, I will mention an interrogatory of a boy frequenting a protestant school in this neighbourhood, who was met a few days ago, upon the road by two of our professors, and examined on a far more fundamental doctrine of religion. “How many Gods are there?” “Nine.” Upon some

But, there is another solid test of the sincere convictions of illiterate catholics, and one to which I confidently appeal, the sentiments with which they meet death. Look at the Roman Ritual, "*De Visitatione et cura infirmorum*;" and see if the practices and prayers there prescribed, betray any wish, that the catholic should expire with his trust in "St. Mary and the Saints," rather than in the Blessed Trinity, or expecting mercy through Indulgences and Purgatory, rather than from the Sacraments. Then go on to the section headed "*Modus juvandi morientes*," and see if in the exhortations which the priest is enjoined to make to the dying man, or in the short prayers he is recommended to suggest, there is a word to encourage such misplaced ideas. I have not time, or I would for the sake of other readers, copy out the heads of exhortation. But, you may perhaps ask, are these prescriptions observed in practice? I answer, most faithfully. I have stood with the Curate, by the death-bed of his parishioner, who for days and nights is never abandoned by him, and I have seen the prescriptions of the Ritual faithfully observed.

But beyond this, it has been my happiness, not once, but often, to attend the poor and illiterate to the threshold of eternity, by acting as their spiritual director, in the hospitals of the Eternal City. How

astonishment being expressed at the answer, he reduced the number to *four*; and in the end acknowledged that he knew nothing of the subject. Yet in this parish there are endowments for education, (by the Catholic Bishop Vesey,) belonging to the Establishment, to the amount of perhaps £1000 a year. Another grown boy owned himself perfectly ignorant concerning the existence of a Deity. I will match the poor peasants of Italy against those of England. Oh! that we took beams out of our own eyes, before we spied motes in others!



often have I said, humbled and shamed by the glowing sentiments of hope and piety, which lit up their last moments, "May my last end be like unto theirs!" Confidence in the intercession of their Redeemer's Mother they certainly had, lively and affectionate; but one who hoped for salvation through her, or otherwise than through the death and blood of her Son, I never met. Purgatory I have heard them speak of, as an object of dread; and I have often heard them pray to God, that their sufferings might be increased here below in expiation of their sins, that so they might forthwith see His face; but as a means of obtaining mercy I never knew it mentioned. And so I can confidently say, that I never knew one who put his trust in Indulgences, as a substitute for the Sacraments; who looked for forgiveness out of Penance, or for grace and strength in his last moments, save in the Viaticum of the holy Eucharist, and in Extreme Unction.

I am satisfied, that if the true sentiments of poor catholics, in catholic countries, were better examined, much error would be removed, and much inconsiderate assertion spared. An eminent professor in Germany, who after having given promise of great literary celebrity by his early productions, has since almost exclusively devoted himself to the duties of the sacred ministry among the poor, assured me not long since, that he would rather give up all that he knows in Sanskrit, Armenian, and classical literature, than surrender the comfort and edification, which he finds in the spiritual

direction of the poor. "I have heard sentences," he remarked, "from the lips of poor illiterate females, fraught with profound meaning, and containing a deeper theology than can be found in books. I have felt humiliated, at seeing how much more learned they were in the wisdom of God, than my study had made me." I felt and acknowledged that he was right.

I will now draw my letter to a close; not because I have touched upon all the points in yours, which I consider erroneous, but because I think I have sufficiently glanced at the grounds on which you maintain the existence of an "authoritative teaching" in the Catholic Church, at variance with the Tridentine decrees. I proposed to myself nothing further, than to show the fallacy of this theory, both as to the existence of the system, and as to its supposed objects.

You will remember, that your late amiable friend, Mr. Froude, in one of his unhappy moments of hasty censure, pronounced us, not Catholics, but "wretched Tridentines." This expression was quoted, with apparent approbation, by his Editors, in their preface.\* It seems hard that now we should be deprived of even this "wretched" title, and sunk by you a step lower in the scale of degradation. Still more it seems unaccountable that you should now court that title, and assert (as your Tract does) that while *we* have abandoned the doctrines of Trent, you, and those who take the Articles in your sense, interpret them in accordance with those doctrines. I say this in a spirit, not of reproach, but rather of

\* Froude's Remains, vol. i. p. xi.

for free admission : and gladly would I sit down in the lowest place in that His kingdom, to make room for the new comers. It would be a day of joy such as the Spouse of the Lamb hath not tasted, since that on which the cross was mounted on the Imperial Diadem.

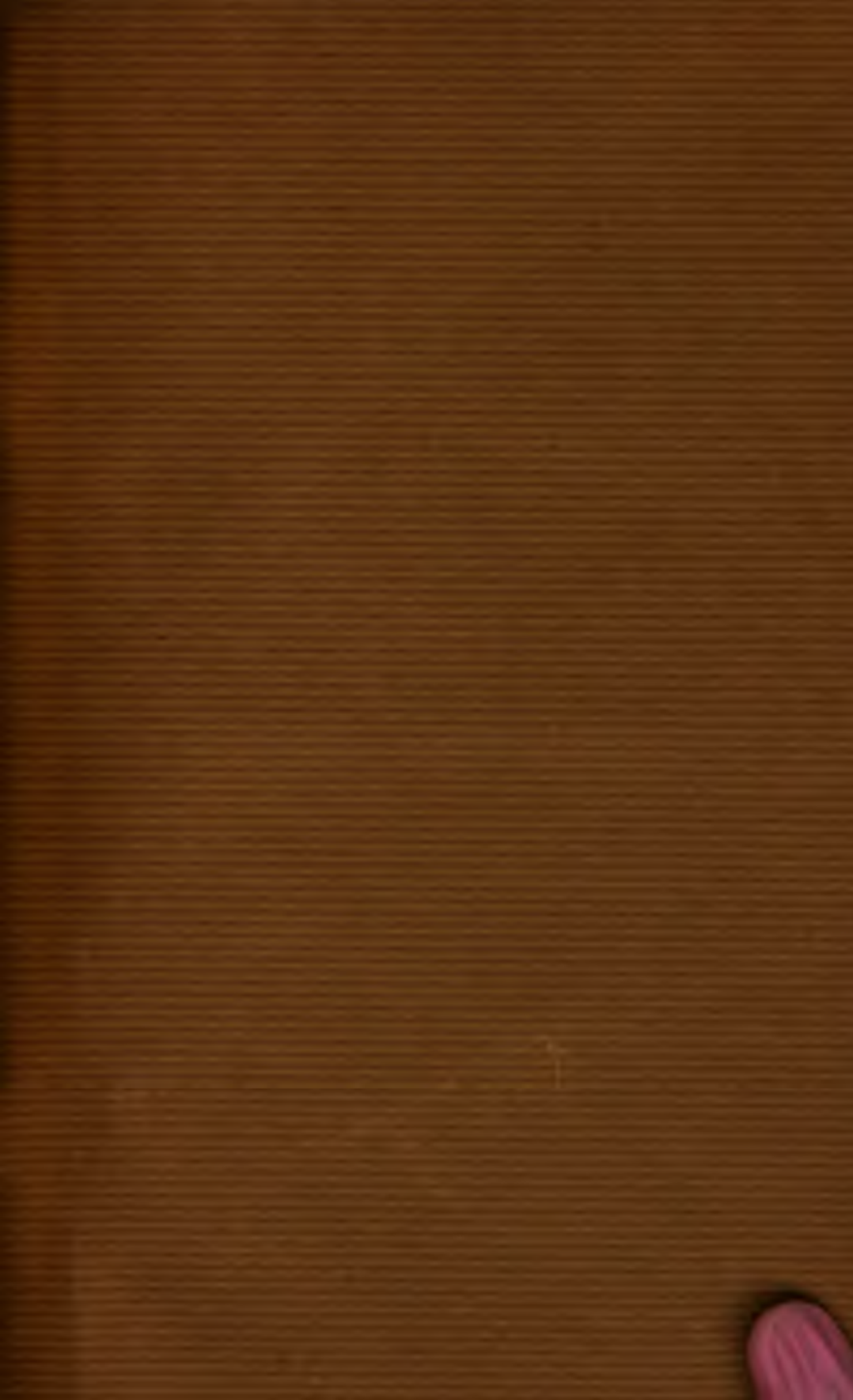
I have the honour to remain,

Rev. Sir,

Yours faithfully in Christ,

N. WISEMAN,

*Bishop of Melipotamus.*



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